



## Flathead National Forest

650 Wolfpack Way

Kalispell, MT 59901

Web: <http://www.fs.usda.gov/flathead>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/FlatheadNF>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/discovertheflathead>

# News Release

Media Contact: Janette Turk

(406) 758-5252

[jturk@fs.fed.us](mailto:jturk@fs.fed.us)



## Blacktail Road Restoration Update

**Bigfork, MT** –April 21<sup>st</sup> – Blacktail Road provides important and popular access for the Flathead Valley and Lakeside to outdoor recreation opportunities and National Forest land management activities in the Blacktail Mountain area. This road is in need of restoration and stabilization due to heavy traffic and resource impacts. Over the past several years, the Flathead National Forest in partnership with Flathead County has successfully competed for road restoration funding under in the Federal Highway Bill. The lower section of the road up to the Forest boundary has already received funding for two phases of resurfacing. One mile of additional paving occurred in 2015. A second phase to complete improvements to at least the Forest Boundary is under design and tentatively scheduled for implementation the summer of 2017. In order to authorize future work for the remainder of the road, an environmental analysis (EA), including public engagement, needs to be completed. The Forest Service awarded EA work to a contractor with the expectation of completing a draft EA this summer.

In February a proposed action for road restoration work was published for public comment. You can find this proposed action on the Flathead National Forest web page. Major elements of the proposed action include aquatic crossing restoration, erosion mitigation, cut and fill slope stabilization, and restoration or improvement of the road surface including paving to the top of the mountain. Public comment was received through the month of February. Around 150 comments were received in response to publication of the proposed action and in response to the public open house held in February in Lakeside. These comments provide valuable insight into how the proposed action is perceived by the public and for the identification of issues.

The Forest Service considered comment on the proposed action to determine whether any additional action alternatives should be developed for the project. A second action alternative was developed which primarily addresses the concerns of financial sustainability and potential change to the recreation setting. This second action alternative would perform the same restoration activities as in the proposed action, but only pave the road to the Blacktail Nordic Cross-Country Ski Trailhead. The remainder of the road to the top of the mountain would be resurfaced with gravel.

You may be wondering what is next with this process. In the next couple of months the Forest Service and contractor will evaluate the environmental effects of the two action alternatives and the no-action alternative. The analysis will be published this summer in the form of a draft EA for public review and comment. The Forest Service will consider comment on the EA and then likely issue a draft decision in early fall.

If you are interested in learning more about the Blacktail Road Restoration Project please contact Rich Kehr or Joleen Dunham at the Swan Lake Ranger District, (406) 837-7500.

-END-